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Fire chief embraces video for intelligence collection

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Fire chief embraces video for intelligence collection

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Download the paper: [“Paper: Leveraging the Use of Technology to Expand Fire Department Service Delivery to Support National Preparedness through Detection and Collection of Intelligence Information”](#)

1) Cloud’s paper began by providing a compelling example of the value of video in gathering intelligence – the July 2005 bomb attacks in London that killed 52 people and wounded 700. Thanks to Closed Circuit Television photographs released the next day, the attackers’ names and their actions leading up to the incident were known within hours, Cloud noted.

The paper then outlines how video technology can be adapted into fire and police practice. Cloud outlined how a product called VIDMIC can be substituted for an ordinary radio microphone to record an incident. The paper describes the specifications of the VIDMIC and how its use can help departments by reducing hours spent writing reports, protecting departments from frivolous lawsuits and by saving money and time.

The device is useful for recording fire scenes, crowd control as well as documenting evidence, unusual activities and suspicious vehicles.

Also, the paper explored some of the legal issues such as privacy concerns, especially in regard to laws on a person’s health information.

2) Cloud wrote her paper as the East Point fire and police departments were embarking on a three-month period of using the VIDMIC.

One challenge was to persuade her staff to embrace a change in practice.

“We (firefighters) normally don’t like change, but it was presented as strengthening our capabilities, as something we could use to increase our situational awareness.”

Also, Cloud linked using the technology to supporting elements of the Department of Homeland Security’s National Preparedness Guidelines, such as information sharing, interoperable communications and intelligence collection. She noted there are more than one million firefighters in the United States and many already collect information when inspecting houses, schools and businesses.

“This technology increased firefighters’ awareness of their potential roles in homeland security,” Cloud said. “The bottom line is that we may be called to a house where terrorist acts are being planned.”

3) Further implementation of the VIDMIC fell by the wayside in 2008 as the city of East Point, like so many other municipalities, began grappling with an economic downturn and budget cuts.

Cloud had to cut about 50 percent of her staff and several of her senior leaders who provided feedback on the project retired.

In conjunction with the city’s police chief, she hopes to pursue grant funding to restart the project.

Associated file: [Paper: Leveraging the Use of Technology to Expand Fire Department Service Delivery to Support National Preparedness through Detection and Collection of Intelligence Information](#)

